

THE 1608/4730.
HISTORY
OF
Sutton - Coldfield,
WITH THE
CONTINUATION,
AND
An ADDENDA,
Not before PUBLISHED,

By an impartial Hand.

Here Dullness, Universal Dullness Reigns,
O'er brainless Heads and desolated Plains.

B.

L O N D O N:

Printed in the YEAR 1762.


1608/4430





THE
HISTORY
OF

Sutton Coldfield.


UTTON COLDFIELD in
 Warwickshire, in situation is almost
 full south of Litchfield, at the di- *S.W.*
 stance of about eight measured
 miles, by which it undoubtedly got its name
 of Sutton, a contraction of South Town: a
 remarkably bleak and barren common, which
 lies directly west of it, just out of the bounds
 of the parish, might probably give it the ad-
 ditional denomination of Coldfield; the air
 being, upon that heath, (as travellers have
 declared) as keen and cold as that upon the
 Highlands of Scotland. The parish is nearly
 oval in its figure, the longest diameter seven
 miles, and the breadth four; the face of it is

agreeably diversified with gently rising hills, and vallies of tolerably fruitful meadows. It is bounded on the north by Shenston, on the west by Barr, on the south by Curdworth, and Aston near Birmingham, and on the east by Middleton : It contains four hamlets, viz. Maney, Hill, Little-Sutton, and Warmley. In the year 1630 there were 298 houses in the parish ; in 1698 there were 310 ; in 1721 the number was increased to 360, which is nearly about the number at present. I compute the inhabitants at 1800. The register begins in the year 1603. The number of christenings for the first twenty years of the register was 645 ; the burials during the same period were 501 ; the number of christenings for the last 20 years, (ending at Christmas 1761) was 747 ; the burials 694. The church stands in the diocese of Litchfield and Coventry, deanery of Arden, and hundred of Hemlingford ; it is dedicated to the holy Trinity, and consists of a nave, chancel, and two side isles ; which isles were built in the reign of Henry the VIIIth, as an addition to the old building, by John Harman, alias Vesey, bishop of Exeter. The nave, being very old and decayed in the foundation, was lately taken down and re-built with a sort of hard sand-stone, of which there is a plentiful quarry within the distance of half a mile : At the west end of the church there is an handsome square tower, 60 feet high, in which is



a deep peel of six bells, together with a clock and chimes newly put up by an approved artist in that branch of business, from the neighbouring town of Birmingham. There is a monument in the church belonging to the family of the Jeffsons (once of note here) put up by the late Sir William Wilton, Knight, an architect in this neighbourhood, in which two busts appear in a sort of alcove or recess, which is supposed to be disclosed to the sight by the drawing back of a pair of curtains cut in white marble, with a golden fringe at their extremities. These, tho' over-looked by the incurious, are remarkable, being so well designed in their folds, and executed with such an easy flowing of the drapery, as would not have disgraced a Roubilliac. There are three vaults in the church, which are taken notice of for consuming the bodies deposited therein very quickly : In two of them lately opened, corpses have been found to have been reduced to mere dust, together with the coffins of wood which inclosed them, the interment of which has been within the memory of man : The height of the church-yard, and the sandiness of the soil, may contribute to this. The present rector is the Rev. Mr. *Riland*, who is likewise the patron of the living. The church doth not stand due east and west, as churches are commonly supposed to do, but varies some degrees from the true points ; the East end declining to the North, and the

in

West

West end to the South ; whether this proceeds from the ignorance of our ancestors in those easy parts of the mathematicks, which every builder understands now-a-days, or whether it arises from the continual change in the variation of the compass, I leave others to determine : I have it from good authority, that the great Sir *Isaac Newton* said, That he believed the variation of the compass at London was in his time not progressive, but stationary ; some of the mathematicians who heard of that opinion of his, declared against it, and experience has confirmed their judgment. In the reign of Henry VIII, the aforesaid Bishop *Vesey*, a native of this parish, procured a royal charter, constituting a corporate body, by the name of the warden and society of the king's town of *Sutton-Coldfield* : To consist of twenty-four members besides the warden, with a grant to them of the whole manor and lordship of the parish, and also a large tract of waste ground called the Park, containing about 3500 acres, which is exceeding useful for pasturage for the cattle of the poorer people, and has also at present more than five thousand pounds worth of wood growing therein, paying to the exchequer a fee farm rent of 58 l. per annum, under which terms they are still held by the corporation. The present warden is Joseph Duncumbe, Esq. The same bishop also built 51 stone houses in the parish, and died in the same place where he

he had so much exerted his munificence, in the year 1555, at the great age of 103. Before his death he founded a free grammar school for the use of the parish boys, which he endowed with an estate in land, now worth near 100 l. per annum. The neighbouring gentlemen, who are trustees, put in the master: the statutes require him to be a layman, and that he, with his scholars, shall daily sing the psalm of "*de profundis*," for the souls of their benefactors. This ceremony you may guess is now omitted, but the custom of chusing a layman for the master is scrupulously observed. The present master is Mr. Paul Lowe. The school-house was re-built in an elegant manner in 1728. About a quarter of a mile Westward from the church stands an old building called the Manor-House, which, tradition says, was once an hunting-seat belonging to William the Conqueror. But however that be, it certainly belonged successively to all the great Earls of Warwick; the last of the Earls who possessed it was Richard Neville, who, joining with the Yorkists, in the time of Henry VI, the king seized it, and by some means it afterwards became the property of some obscure persons, and fell to utter ruin, it at present only serving for the residence of a labourer. Sir Lister Holte, Bart. stands at present seized of the freehold of that, and some lands lying round it. The name of the last gentleman

man who lived in the house was Dawney ; he died in 1671, and was buried by his own direction in a grave nine feet deep, in a part of the church-yard where the solid rock is found at the depth of little more than four feet ; consequently he lies five feet deep within the solid stone : If his design was not to have his bones disturbed, he probably will obtain it, as nobody will be at the trouble to dig so far after him again : His burial was further remarkable, in that the floor of the market house fell down by the weight of a large assembly of poor people, who were gathered together to receive a dole of charity given away in that place upon the day of his funeral ; but providentially no lives were lost.

In the park before-mentioned is plainly seen the course of Ikenild-street, one of the four eminent Roman consular military ways : It is now over-grown with furze and heath, but being high ridged up with stone and gravel, it hath baffled all the efforts of time or the plough to efface it, and probably will continue unlevelled to the end of the world. Its course here is from N. N. E. to S. S. W. and it is continued without any considerable interruption quite across the island from Tinemouth in Northumberland, to Winchester and Southampton, a truly grand work, which will always be a just object of admiration. Some rivulets that take their rise in this park, feed several mills built in
and

and near it; not only for grinding corn, but for boring musket-barrels, polishing metal-buttons, making saws, grinding axes, knives, bayonets, and performing various other operations for the mechanical traders in Birmingham; who having had great numbers of their workmen impressed, or voluntarily enlisted into his majesty's service during this war, have set their inventions to work to perform by mills many operations which used to employ more hands than can be procured in the latter end of a war, when so many have been buried in Germany and Canada. The event has rewarded their industry and ingenuity, and makes the dearth of handicraftsmen less felt than otherwise it would be. The streams themselves not being capable of constantly moving the mills by their common current, reservoirs are made, which yet have the inconvenience of being sometimes overflowed. Almost a century ago, *viz.* July 24, 1668, a great flood, owing to a sudden rain, flowed over a stone wall, above ten feet high, which served for a mound to a pool close adjoining to the town called Sutton Pool. Two other large pools, of above 20 acres each, called Windley and Bracebridge pools, had their dam heads both broken through by the press of water deluging the meadow lands below them, which very large quantity of water falling in the middle of the summer, was then thought

so remarkable as to deserve to be chronicled in the parish register, where the memorial of it now stands ; the most probable opinion is, that it was occasioned by the breaking of a water-spout. The park also furnishes some fuel to the poor inhabitants, from a vast magazine of peat near the Roman road mentioned above, composed of the rotted branches of some thousands of fir-trees, cut down by the Romans, to enable them to pass over a morass there. The bodies of the trees are sometimes dug up sound, with the marks of the axe upon them, which effectually confutes the opinion of those who suppose they have lain there ever since Noah's deluge : Besides this fuel, pit coals are brought from about seven miles distance ; they are laid down here at six-pence *per* hundred weight. Two annual fairs are kept here ; one upon Trinity Monday, and the other upon the 8th of November, at which are sold great numbers of horned cattle, horses, and sheep, but nothing of any other sort of commodities worth notice. A toll of a groat is paid to the warden of the corporation for each horse sold, who appoints an officer to register the names of the buyer and seller, together with that of a reputable voucher, whom the seller is obliged to produce to attest his good character ; the marks and age of the horse are also noted, in order that the sale of any stolen horses at this fair may be
totally

totally prevented. There are no paintings of value in the parish, excepting one original of the Earl of Essex (Queen Elizabeth's favourite) in the possession of Charles Sacheverell Chadwick, Esq; of New Hall; but this has received damage by hanging in a damp room where there is seldom any fire. Painting is not the taste of the gentry here. The buildings have mostly a neat appearance, the bricks being made out of a vein of clay which turns to an excellent red colour when well burnt; they are sold cheap, the price of them at the kiln being only half a guinea *per* thousand. Marl is also plentiful, which, when laid upon our sandy soil, produces great effects: although the farmers injudiciously lay great quantities of lime upon their land, (which is brought hither from some quarries eight miles distance, at 25 s. *per* waggon-load) this, by its heat, producing a fermentation, makes a shew for one or two crops; but afterwards it is of detriment to the land, especially when often repeated, as the barren calx left behind is at best a useless load upon the good soil, if it does not contribute to canker the roots of whatever grows thereon. In digging wells, after one or two shallow strata of mould, gravel, and clay, a hard sand, or crumbling sand-stone is generally continued to the depth of 60 feet, which is the greatest depth we have occasion to go to for water, but the depths

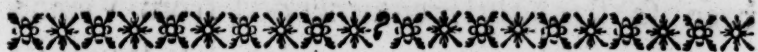
are so variable, that in some wells the springs are within five feet of the surface. The water is, in general, soft.

The rent of our best meadow land scarcely exceeds one guinea *per* acre, the arable-land is let at 14 or 15 s. The method of tillage is usually to plow up the turf in the spring, after which the land lies fallow during the summer, and Michaelmas a crop of wheat is sown, after which three more crops are taken successively of barley, oats, or pease; with the last of these crops is sown clover, or ryegrass, to bring a turf again, which must continue for six, or even ten years before it is broke up again, otherwise the land will be too much impoverished. We have no hop-gardens here; saffron is unknown among us, and very small quantities of flax or hemp are cultivated. In the unfrequented lanes and old hedges the *solanum lethale foliis majoribus* grows very common; but no children, or other persons have been hurt by it lately, whose escape may be partly owing to the humane care of some of our bettermost neighbours, who destroy it whenever they meet with it in their walks. The *colchicum commune*, another poisonous plant, also grows plentifully in our neighbourhood, but the people never meddle with it. The *cicuta vulgaris maculosa* is also very plentiful; let me add, that a skilful surgeon of this town who has made use of its extract, which has
been

been so strongly recommended from Vienna as a specific in cancerous cases, has found its success much inferior to his expectations. Hunting and shooting are the principal diversions here, there being a great many foxes, hares, and partridges; the large pools also afford wild ducks and teal. And let me finish my account with observing, in general, that Sutton Coldfield is universally allowed to have a pleasant situation, an healthful air, its full proportion of all the accommodations of life, and an agreeable neighbourhood; which last circumstance is chiefly owing to a total extinction of party-zeal, a mischievous passion which raged here with all its baleful influence, about ten or twelve years ago, and was the cause of some very disagreeable animosities; but all such petty distinctions now sleep in oblivion, especially since the accession of our present most gracious sovereign King George the III^d, to whom the inhabitants seem all so unanimous in paying a loyal and chearful obedience, that I presume his majesty has not a more dutiful set of subjects in any part of his (now) very extensive dominions.

Yours, &c.

INCOLA.



CONTINUATION.

To the Printer of the London Evening-Post.

S I R,

Tho' the description of Sutton Coldfield in Warwickshire, inserted in the Chronicle, is a very pretty one, it is, begging the author's pardon, very defective in many particulars.—Sutton, which is allow'd to be one of the prettiest and neatest towns of its size in the kingdom, is also the cleanest, being handsomely paved, and, as there is a gentle descent from the school-house to the bottom of the town, rain, which makes other towns dirty, washes Sutton clean; and as it is chiefly inhabited by gentlemen and widows of independant fortunes, an empty house fit for a gentleman's family is a *rara avis in terris* there. It is situate in the center of the four great towns of Litchfield, Birmingham, Tamworth, and Walsal, from all which it is but five computed miles, tho', as he says, it may measure eight to the city of Litchfield. It is also but three miles * from Colehill, and by being in the coach road to Chester, is supply'd from thence three times a week with sea-fish by land carriage in its way to Birmingham, tho'

not

* It is five computed miles, and measures more than seven.

not so cheap as London, Lobsters being a shilling per pound ; tho' in all probability, it will not be long before the London plan is adopted. As to the gentlemen being fond of hunting and shooting, they are no more so than other country gentlemen ; and if I may say it without incurring the penalties of *scandalum magnatum*, those diversions are much more innocent and laudable than gaming and whoring ; vices to which the good folks of Sutton are strangers——There has been but one kept mistress in the place these forty years, and she was treated with so much contempt by the virtuous ladies of Sutton, that she decamp'd as soon as her quarter was up.——

As to there being no original pictures in its neighbourhood, it must certainly be a great mistake, for the Earls of Suffolk and Berkshire, Northampton, Ailsford, Dartmouth, and Donnegal, Lord Viscount Weymouth, Lord Middleton of Middleton, Lord Digby, Sir Henry Harpur, Sir Lister Holte, Sir Orlando Bridgeman, Sir Robert Burdet, Sir Robert Lawley, Sir Theophilus Biddulph, and Sir Harry Gough, have all of them seats in that neighbourhood, and some of them magnificent ones, and therefore very likely don't want magnificent furniture and good pictures. If the inhabitants of the five towns above-mentioned are taken in, there cannot be less than fifty or sixty families within little more than an hour's ride of Sutton, who either do, or can keep equipages.

In

In the description of the church, he omits an handsome organ, and the most material, tho' not handsomest monument ; *viz.* that of Dr. Vesey, Bishop of Exeter, and Lord Chancellor in King Henry VIIIth's time ; (which has been a few years ago beautified by his Great Grand Nephew, Wyrely Byrch, Esq;) the Patron and Founder of the town, which before was only a large village till he procured them a charter and a market, and the extraordinary privilege of sixty acres of land in the park to every person that should build an house at Sutton.——He is also mistaken in the handsome monument he mentions, it being for Mr. Pudsey of Langley, who left co-heiresses, one married to Low Folliot, who built the fine house in the park inhabited by Simon Luttrell, Esq; and the other to William Jeffson, Esq;——It was built by William Wilson, a handsome young mason, at the expence of the sorrowful widow, who, to repair the loss of her dearly beloved Pudsey, married him ; and to complete the farce, brought him up to town, where she had interest enough to procure him the honour of knight-hood. On the King's asking what estate the gentleman had, it was reply'd, that his lady had 800 *l. per ann.* and he had 3 ; which was literally true, Sir William having no more than three pounds *per annum* of his own, as the income of her estate was spent in supporting her ladyship's dignity.

Sir.

Sir William, on her death, very contentedly return'd to his old trade of a mason, and used to laugh at his title. As he was really much of a gentleman, and had behaved extremely well during his prosperity, he was employ'd by all the gentlemen in the neighbourhood ; and Lord Folliot not only kindly kept him, but let him work in an out-house at his seat at Castle-Bromwich. But the Lord and Lady Folliot thought it no disgrace to have a mason for a father in law. The Jeffon family, (who had nothing to brag of but the being descended from a Glover of Coventry who was knighted) took it in so great dudgeon, that when Sir William apply'd for leave to be buried in the same vault with his beloved lady, they refused it, for which Sir William was up with them, by ordering his body to be buried in the church-yard, close to the wall where the vault is ; and against the wall is a handsome oval monument, very probably of his own work, on which is recorded his humility and love for his lady, and their ill-natur'd pride ; for every person that goes to church to read it, is almost close to the door.

I am, Sir, your humble Servant,
W. H.

P. S. Bishop Vesey retired to Sutton, and liv'd in great splendor, spending 1500 *l.* *per ann.* (a vast sum in those days) at Moor-Hall, the seat of John Addyes, Esq; many years since high sheriff of the county.

C A D D E N D A.



A D D E N D A.

By A G R I C O L A.

THE soil in the parish of Sutton-Coldfield is as oppositely different in its nature, as that of Bagshot-Heath and the fruitful plains of Belvoir: The North and West side of the town being partly sandy, and partly a gravelly soil; and that on the South side being tolerably rich and loomy, inclining to marl, which is also found to be very deep, and is used in great abundance upon lands in a different nature. The meadows are chiefly very bad, of a soil known here by the name of Peat, which is a black, barren earth, very voracious and destructive of manure: However it is in some places the visible decay of fallen trees, and is convertible to a double useful purpose; One, (we have already been told) is fire-fuel for the poor; the other is by burning it to ashes for manure, according to the common methods used by the farmers in Berkshire. However the farmers in general about Sutton cannot be prevailed upon to think any manure proper or profitable which their fore fathers did not use; nor are they possessed of so much humility as to think the scholar, the stranger, or the traveller capable of instructing them, and as ignorant are they of the principles of salts and vegetation.

This

This process of making and using Peat-ashes has been try'd with a profitable effect by two or three of a more enterprising genius, which may probably in another century bring them into general use.

Lime, we have been told, is used injudiciously in great quantities to the detriment of the land: But it is plain the author understands Agriculture much less than his neighbours. It is very rare to hear a farmer or his landlord complain of his land being over limed. It is rather a customary practice for the owner to allow his tenant a certain stipulated sum yearly to be laid out in Lime for the improvement of his estate; and in the Marly stiff land it is of manifest use and profit; and for that purpose it is fetch'd by farmers at a further distance from the kilns, and at a much larger expence than to Sutton; (Chalk or Sea-shells, were they to be had, might probably be made to answer the same end in an inferior degree). However, for the light, sandy, and gravelly soil, Lime is not of that duration or utility; and the most sensible farmers begin to think the present increas'd expence of Limeing inadequate to the profit. It may be observed, that Quick-Lime, tho' so exceeding hot and acrimonious, becomes when slaked of a quite different nature: A paradox understood by few.

One of the most curious pieces of workmanship about this church has been omitted,

which is the pulpit, an ornament elegantly neat, yet simple.

The clock and chimes, to say no worse, are most shamefully neglected.

The organ is very small, but very neat, and what is more, a very good one; and we may, in justice to Mr. Alcock's merit, very justly boast of being served with church musick full as well as our neighbours. Towards the ornaments and repairs of the church, the present rector gave 100 l. and his brother, who is curate, was at the expence of the organ. The exclusive expences amounted to about 1400 l. which was raised by sale of the park timber.

Henry VIII, at the request of Bishop Vesey, (who was, I think, tutor to one of the King's daughters) was a munificent founder to this place.—The benefits arising to the poor from the free enjoyment of so large a tract of inclosed ground, abounding with wood and water, if properly exercised and preserved according to the intention of the doner, would have been very great and valuable: But it has happened, that vast quantities of wood and timber have been sold and disposed of, and many of the vallies, which are by far the most valuable part of the waste land, have been granted away by the body corporate to several of their own aldermen or members, and others, for the making of pools and other purposes.—How far these grants, made by

by trustees for the poor, with rents reserved to, and enjoyed by themselves, are legal and valid, may, if litigated, admit of a dispute.

There hath also lately been inclosed 48 acres of land out of the said park by the universal consent of the inhabitants, and ratified by parliament, at a certain annual rent for ever, in order to accommodate Simon Luttrell, Esq; who is now building, or rather finishing a noble house, commanding a very extensive prospect, and in the highest taste, on the ruins of one formerly begun by Lord Folliot for a hunting seat.

It has been objected by many that the house is too large and valuable for the situation, the lands surrounding it being extremely barren, and the estate belonging to it but small in compass, and withal destitute of both wood and water, except only what the park affords, to which it is contiguous. To this it may be answer'd, that this gentleman has a good estate of rich lands within five miles distance; that the salubrity of the air makes amends for the infertility of the soil; that it lies in the centre of the kingdom, and upon the road leading from London to Ireland, where he hath also another very fine estate that he hath lately purchas'd; Bracebridge-pool, a fine piece of water of forty acres, environ'd by two woods, and within half a mile's distance of his house, which is a very desirable addition;

addition; and it may be added to all this, that his family is so very large and numerous as to require no moderate sized house for their reception; and I may I think, justly be allowed to pay the member of Wigan the same compliment in prose, that a poet lately did in verse to a neighbouring noble lord, on his building Hagley Hall, viz. "That his house is a true emblem of his mind": However I hope with a different effect; for his lordship misconceived the poet's meaning, and resented it; thinking he had charged him with a vastness of ambition, instead of a laudable greatness of spirit; a character equally and undeniably applicable to both our heroes in architecture.

The next and most material privilege annexed to this place, is the free grammar school, which endowment is worth no less than 140 l. per annum: Notwithstanding which plentiful stipend, about thirty years ago 600 l. was raised by sale of the poor's timber out of the park, to build the present school-house, which is capable of receiving fifty scholars, but for many years past has not been honour'd with one single boarder. It was formerly, till within these 12 or 15 years, a school of great repute, and was a seminary of learning for most of the gentlemens sons in this part of the country. Many scholars went with credit to the universities and to business, and did honour to their master, who, when

when in the vigour of his life, was both capable and active ; his scholars rather lov'd than fear'd him ; he led them forward thro' the thorny path of learning with a parent's hand ; he fed them with mother's milk ; if he had then a fault, it was a profuse generosity, becoming indeed the gentleman, but inconsistent with the school-master. He was caress'd and esteem'd by rich and poor, till an unhappy event, and its unhappy consequences, gradually reduced his fame too low, too late to be recover'd.

The cause is notorious ; but private or personal reflection is not my province : *I love the man*, yet the abuse of so noble a publick charity deserves publick attention. The parish is interested in the education of the children, who are *laterally* sent, even by the trustees of this charity, to foreign schools at a great expence. The commonwealth is injur'd by the deficiency of education in those whose parents' stations in life are unable to support the expence of sending their children elsewhere. Thus this great, this worthy foundation, is become almost a sine-cure ; and it is an alarming imputation upon the duty and integrity of the trustees, or others, who have a right of visitation, that so glaring a prostitution should be made of what is so obvious to their knowledge, and of what is so precious and sacred in the sight of all those who have experienced either the utility or want of a liberal education.

The

The registering of horses with vouchers is not a custom peculiar to Sutton fair: It might with more propriety have been told us, that the warden and society walk in grand procession with a band of musick, and publickly proclaim each fair, and the holding of a court of Pie-powder for hearing and determining disputes and offences arising therein. One thing however is deserving publick notice, That the inhabitants of Sutton, by express grant from the crown under the said charter, are Toll-free in all fairs and markets.

The polite arts are as little admired and cultivated in this place, as perhaps in any of his majesty's corporate towns in England; it is the centre of six markets, some of which are remarkable for their skill and success in the iron and toy manufactories; but (alas) at Sutton the spirit of trade has no existence, and to determine what is the reigning taste or darling passion of the people, we must consult the infalliable oracle of every female's tea-table.

I have by enquiry and ocular labour endeavoured to verify the assertion, that the *solanum lethale* is very common; but in spite of industry or prejudice, I find it is very *uncommon*, and much more so than the *cynoglossom* (lethale) which has done more execution amongst mortal men, than all the other poisons upon earth, and which seems here to operate most wonderfully upon
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the passions, and peculiarly adapted to the ease of female minds.

The delightful and healthful situation of Sutton, very aptly attracts the curiosity and residence of strangers; yet there is one inconveniency that seems to want redressing, as well for the ease and encouragement of the gentry, as for the benefit of the necessary tradesmen.

Provisions here are upon an average, at least 10 per cent. dearer than at five other market towns within five computed miles distance, (amongst which is Colehill,) and which occasions some gentlemen to reside at Sutton without doing any real service to the place.

Was the game protected in Sutton as it is by Lord Middleton and other gentlemen on the confines of the parish, no place would abound with greater plenty; but to the shame of our magistrates and sportsmen, there are a set of poachers who have for many years lived entirely by that publick and avowed profession of destroying the game, and who in despight and defiance of the laws, still continue to keep dogs, snares, and nets, and therewith exercise their tolerated calling unmolested and undisturbed; and yet some few hares are always to be found; and there is no less than seven packs of hounds kept within five miles of this place. It may not here be useless to observe, that attempts have been

set on foot to prevent every man from coursing or shooting who is not legally qualified, and this too specially levelled against some reputable tradesmen, and people who go out merely for their diversions, and that seldom : I therefore beg leave to remind these reformers, that the way to preserve the game is to execute the laws strictly against night-poachers : That the design of the legislature was to suppress poaching, the parent of idleness, theft, and drunkenness ; and not to deprive the industrious tradesman or farmer from a pleasure, which the law of nature has made common to all : That all the arts and methods used by Day-Sportsmen, could never destroy the game here to a scantiness ; and whatever the law may be, any unreasonable innovation upon the liberty of a Sutton alderman or freeholder, uninterruptedly enjoyed from 32d Henry VIII, to this time, might occasion more trouble and resentment than a wise gentleman would choose to bring upon himself ; the way to retaliation being broad and open.

Sutton, as well as other places, hath felt the foolish effects of an outrageous party zeal. A few years ago she was under the prosecution of the crown for blindly intermeddling with matters relative to the state. But Jacobitism is happily no more : Faction in politics has given place (here) to Private Discord, and Parochial Dissentions. The Tythes being
raised

raised beyond the usual modus (paid by consent) and equal to that paid by the best lands in the kingdom, has occasioned great discontent and trouble. One cause is depending in the Exchequer for the recovery of Tythes from barren lands new cultivated; and the church having been pull'd down and re-built, and repair'd by the rector's singular authority, without the consent of the church-wardens or vestry, has given rise to several suits in the ecclesiastical court, between the rector and corporation on one side, and the inhabitants on the other. Pity it is, that the same unanimity, the same moderation and social love, does not prevail at this hour, as in the days but lately past: But so it is, as Solomon tells us, "Only by pride cometh contention."

The best method of cultivating our light land is not by taking four successive crops, and to lie six or ten years before it is broken up a-fresh: This is borrow'd from the manner of tilling the commonable fields, which is a very erroneous method, and rarely practised by the farmer on his own private lands.

Turnips and Barley are the most profitable produce of our lands, which if in good power, will also afford a subsequent crop of wheat or peas; and after that one crop (only) of spring corn with seeds. There are, indeed, various ways of management, but this one general rule prevails with the most experienced farmer, viz. That the fewer crops are taken

at one course of tillage, the better so the land can be brought into order for laying down with seeds; which land should be broke up again the second or third year at farthest; the seeds then beginning to wear out, and the natural grass not being sufficient to pay for the land to lye longer untilld: And it is the practice of one of the most experienced judges in this neighbourhood, to have his land two years up and two years down; that is, two years in tillage, and two in clover; and so on in a continued succession. And this, I am confident, answers the purpose of light lands preferably to any other; and for the truth of which I appeal to the judgment of the sage and wife.

I cannot say the people of this place are more vicious than in other places: They have a good reason to be otherwise, as far as the precept or example of their pastors and magistrates can operate. But however it is a great mistake, that only one mistress hath ever been kept in Sutton.—It would be deem'd as malicious as it is needless to charge particulars; but I can with truth assert, that I hardly ever knew the town without one—One roof is well remembered to have contained three successively; and it may as truly be said, there is one for more, now to be found. How many in this little place have lately undergone a trial of skill with Mercury, the physical gentlemen can best testify. How-
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ever it should be added, in honour to our civil rulers, that these things are only done in secret ; and from the known indefatigable zeal of the new elected warden in the cause of virtue and morality, we may expect to see a pleasing reformation in the morals of the people committed to his charge now in a double capacity. And true it is, the town has no small debt of gratitude to pay the gentleman whose office is expired, for his very becoming example, and for his sustaining it with a truly laudable dignity ; and in whom only the friendly neighbour, and a constant residence was wanting to complete the desirable magistrate.

There is one story concerning the late Sir William Wilton and his wife, which the preceding anecdotes of his life has lately called to the mind of one who knew him. Sir William, a little before his death, being talk'd to by a friend, how hard and cruel it was in the Jeffons family not to suffer him to be buried in their vault with his wife, made this facetious answer ; “ That it did not at all concern him ; for, says he, I will be buried on the outside of the church, directly opposite the vault where my wife lies, and there will be only a single stone wall betwixt us ; and as I am a stone mason, there will be no kind of labour or difficulty in cutting my road thro' the wall to my old bedfellow.”

There

There are curiosities in the park (exclusive of black game and wild horses) that have hitherto been omitted in this history ; one of which is a spring called Rounton Well, a water remarkably cold, and which is quined round with stone, and discharges a prodigious current of water. This well of water is held very lightly in esteem by the natives, but is greatly resorted to by strangers, who come from distant parts to drink and bathe in the same. It contains but a small portion of salts, but has been known to cure some inveterate cutaneous and chronic diseases, which had long baffled the best efforts of medicine : And this I have observed to succeed best in children, and in thin and lean subjects, and where the viscera has been judged sound. There is also found a kind of white sand in one of the woods, which on being assay'd, is found to contain a considerable portion of silver, even sufficient to defray the expence of collecting and working it.

The rectory of Sutton is worth a clear 400 l. per ann. The parsonage-house is a good modern building, long accusom'd to hospitality, and to which belongs a tract of very fertile glebe land of about 50 acres, over part of which is a pretty prospect of the town, thro' a vисто of lime trees, planted by the late *most* worthy rector ; but there are adjacent brick-kilns that are rather a nuisance to the habitation.

Within

Within a mile of Sutton is a very antient seat called Moor Hall, where Bishop Vesey (the father of this town) spent the remainder of his days in retirement; it is a very poor pile of building, without prospect, or indeed any one beauty to recommend it to a man of taste; however it is a very valuable demesne, the timber thereon being worth nearly the value of the land; it is now devised by the will of John Addyes, Esq; to his nephew John Hacket, second son of Andrew Hacket, Esq; of Moxhall, in whom knowledge and benevolence are eminently conspicuous.

The greatest ornament and addition to the buildings in the town of Sutton, is the house of William Jeffon, Esq; (most remarkable for its neatness of situation) and the more spacious and useful building, bought and inhabited by Joseph Duncumb, Esq; our late warden, who has spared no expence to render it elegant and commodious; it was built by Sir William Wilson, and has a stone-bridge at its entrance, before which is a kind of a semi-circular court; it carries still an air of antiquity in its front; and is rather made heavy to the sight by a set of stone rails and bannisters, pedestals and urns, (above a strong cornish of stone-work) which if taken down, would greatly increase and improve the perspective, and is in the opinion of judges, an indispensable improvement.

These two houses are opposite, and a great ornament to each other.

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The history of the Jeffons family might properly have been continued to the present times ; but the male line has undergone such a mutilation and defection since the death of the late Pudsey Jeffon, Esq; of Langley, as to demand a decent veil from the hand of charity. The only female issue is ingrafted into the blood of a more antient family, being married to Charles Holte, Esq; only brother and heir to Sir Lister Holte, Baronet, whose title and estate (some part of which lies in Sutton) Mr. Holte's issue is likely to enjoy.—More need not to be said, than that he is esteemed and toasted by his country as an *honest* gentleman, which is as much as ought to be said of any man whilst living.

The antient seat of the Jeffons at Langley, is now inhabited by the Rev. Mr. Inge, brother of the late Theodore William Inge, Esq; whose social virtues and integrity of manners he amply inherits.

I think it has not been mentioned that the present high steward, which is an office of high honour belonging to this corporation, is the Right Honourable Lord Middleton, who has since his election thereunto, shewn a peculiar respect and compliment to the town ; his deputy is Mr. Edward Homer, a very reputable and worthy attorney, whose house is little inferior to any in size or conveniency. His predecessor was Mr. John Gibbons, a man of good natural abilities
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and remarkably generous, and who fell an unfortunate victim to the enjoyment of those generous passions of the soul, which kept within due bounds, would have made his life as valuable and memorable, as his death was lamented by those who knew the goodness of his heart. The business of a deputy steward is much the same of town clerks in other corporate or borough towns; he has the legal direction and management of the whole parish business; keeps a court of record every three weeks for the tryal of civil actions, wherein they hold to bail for 40 s. and upwards; they also therein levy fines and suffer recoveries to barr dower, intails, and remainders; they hold sessions, courts-leets, and other customary courts; and it is expressly granted by their charter, that they shall have and exercise as much privilege and power as the city of Coventry; which however they do not, but commit felons to the county goal. There is one peculiar privilege, that every inhabitant is a landed man, being always possess'd of a portion of land, which is drawn by ballot every four years.—No county officer can enter this franchise to arrest, &c. without special licence.

There is also a peculiar custom used by themselves in electing their aldermen and magistrates, which has *hitherto* pass'd unnoticed; besides, that contrary to the express letter of their charter, they venture to choose

in foreigners as members of their body corporate, who might with equal propriety live at *Penzance*, or the *Orkneys*, as five miles out of the parish; and it may once for all be observ'd, that it was the will, design, and command of their royal founder, or rather of their mitred benefactor, (who also endeavoured to establish the woollen manufactory here) by every possible act and institution, to render the town of Sutton flourishing and populous. This appears by the whole scope and tenor of their charter, and by the many priviledges therein granted to all inhabitants whatever, without any distinction. Priviledges and inducements, which if legally dispenc'd and enjoy'd, might before this day, have rendered the parish of Sutton-Coldfield as flourishing and populous, as the neighbouring town of Birmingham.

To obtain a compleat and true history of any place, it is absolutely necessary to correct the errors of those who are misinform'd. This will excuse any contradiction of what other gentlemen may have said of this subject.

Chester lies farther distant from Colehill than Birmingham by several miles; nor does the high road leading from London to Chester thro' Colehill go nearer to Birmingham than Sutton-Coldfield, (thro' which is the nearest and direct road;) whence it follows, that the Chester carriers do not supply Sutton in their way to Birmingham: There are indeed some horse-fishmen who supply all the
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the towns up the Chester road, as far as Litchfield; and if any fish remains unsold, it is at last brought as far as Sutton; and which is often farther than it will bear carriage: There are also some fishermen who go thro' this place with fresh-water fish from the Trent, and sometimes with sea-fish from Lincolnshire, in their way to Birmingham, which is by much the most plentiful market; it being also supplied with oysters, herrings, &c. from Bristol, and with fine salmon from the Severn. And one great conveniency attending Sutton is, the constant and daily passing of carriages and people, by whom the better necessaries of life may be sent for, which our own town does not afford.

No place formerly was more noted for hard drinking than Sutton; scarce a night happen'd but most of the better sort of people assembled together, either at the public, or some of their own private houses, to spend the evening, which was generally done in a very jovial manner. The ladies had a good assembly; the bowling-green then flourished, and there the neighbouring gentlemen resorted: The only ambition was, who had the best tap of ale, and too often who could drink of it longest; but in this, as in other things, one extream succeeded another. A green there is,—supported not for social pleasure, but for charity:—The assemblies are no more:—Dear harmless quadrille, once adored, is now wholly neglected:—Visits

of forms supply the place of free and friendly intercourse;—jealously has superceded confidence and brotherly love;—And upon the whole, no place has, in the space of a dozen years, undergone a greater revolution; and that with this one single advantage,—I mean the health of individuals, who now drink, if they drink at all, in dark obscurity.

Publick nuisances are certainly an object of animadversion; the laws are sufficiently salutary and strong against vagrants and beggars; for these, Sutton is a most noted rendezvous; scarce a night comes in the year, but they are harboured by a house tolerated by licence, and connived at against law; and such only are these itinerant lodgers who are the direct objects of the civil power. Perhaps no one better service could be done to the commonwealth towards the prevention of idleness and theft, than an active execution of the vagrant act, and a total suppression of beggars, who are a national reproach, and whom every subject has a right, (with a reward) to apprehend; and how a justice or peace officer can reconcile it to his oath and duty, to see beggars and vagrants pass unmolested, whom he is commanded by law to apprehend, is to me incomprehensible.

That unanimity and every social virtue may prevail over the minds of each individual member, of this little community, is, and shall be, the sincere wish and endeavour of their brother and friend.

F I N I S.



